

Claims

- 5        1. A method of signing a configuration file having one or  
more configuration settings, the method comprising the  
steps of:  
10      a) enabling a user to create a configuration file,  
              the configuration file having a series of  
              configuration settings contained therein,  
15      b) storing the configuration file, and  
              wherein the creation of the configuration file effects  
              the association of an electronic signature with the  
              configuration file, the electronic signature being  
              uniquely identifiable with the user who created the  
              file.
- 20      2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the creation  
              of a configuration file comprises the editing of a  
              pre-existing configuration file.
- 25      3. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the creation  
              of a configuration file comprises the creation of a  
              new configuration file.
- 30      4. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the  
              electronic signature is incorporated with the document  
              which it signs
- 35      5. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the  
              electronic signature is referenced by the document  
              which it signs.
- 40      6. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the  
              electronic signature utilises an asymmetric signature  
              type signature.

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7. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the electronic signature utilises a symmetric signature type.
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8. A method of authenticating the validity of any changes or updates to an electronic document which contains configuration settings, the method comprising the steps of:
- 10 a) associating a configuration file with an electronic signature, and
- b) referencing the configuration file, the referencing of the configuration file being effected to retrieve instructions as to how a specific task should be conducted, and
- c) verifying the electronic signature associated with the configuration file, and
- 15 wherein once verified, a use of the configuration settings stored within the configuration file is allowed.
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9. The method as claimed in claim 8 further comprising the step of disabling use of the configuration settings stored within the configuration file if the step of verifying the electronic signature with the configuration effects a failed verification.
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10. The method as claimed in claim 8 comprising the additional steps of authenticating a digital certificate associated with the electronic signature.
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11. The method as claimed in claim 8 wherein the digital signature associated with the configuration file is the signature of the last user to edit the configuration file.

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12. A computer system adapted to provide an improved security of configuration files, the system comprising:
- 5       a) a input/output module adapted to receive instructions from a user and furnish a response to those instructions,
- 10      b) a processor adapted to effect the processing of instructions contained within a configuration file,
- 15      c) a datastore adapted to store a configuration document during periods when the configuration information is not required,
- 20      d) a file system memory adapted to effect a retrieval of the stored configuration document prior to processing of the configurations instructions contained within the configuration document and,  
wherein the retrieval of a document from the datastore and extraction of the instructions contained within that document is effected only after verification of an electronic signature associated with that document.
13. The system as claimed in claim 12 additionally comprising a certificate authentication means, the certificate authentication means adapted to authenticate a certificate associated with the signature.

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